RACE, SEXUALITY, AND POWER IN IVENS MACHADO'S VIDEO PERFORMANCE *ESCRAVIZADOR-ESCRAVO* (1974)

by

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ABSTRACT

Brazilian artist Ivens Olinto Machado's experimental video, *Escravizador-Escravo* (1974), deploys the body to elucidate a violent power struggle between the artist and an Afro-Brazilian man. The video constructs clear hierarchal relationship between the two actors while also introducing a homoerotic element. The title and the video performance recall the socio-political hierarchy of the master-slave dynamic present during colonial and imperial eras in Brazil (c.1530-1888), yet reveals more complexity within this historic relationship. As a result, Machado's video presents an antithesis to the popular theory of *racial democracy* suggested by Brazilian writer and sociologist Gilberto Freyre in his seminal 1933 book *Casa Grande e Senzala* (The Masters and The Slaves). Freyre argued that the establishment of Brazil's hegemonic ethnic and sexual identity was the result of the tolerance and benevolence of slave-masters, not racial domination or oppression. After the abolition of slavery in Brazil, Freyre's ideas continued to feed racial blindness, which failed to recognize race as a significant factor in socio-economic inequalities. In a comparison of the artist's video, *Versus* from the same year, this thesis seeks to demonstrate Machado's interest in manipulating normative structures of power, employing racial and homosexual relations. While existing scholarship on video art has focused on its emergence in Brazil, my thesis argues for a study of video art from the perspective of race relations and the emergence of homosexual subcultures in the 1960s and 70s. Through this expanded scope, it is possible to gain a nuanced insight into the relation of video art and identity politics, at a time when Brazil was under social, political, and cultural repression

of the military dictatorship (1964-1985). Ultimately, *Escravizador-Escravo*, an obscure and understudied work, proposes video art's potential for exposing contradictions within and raising awareness of Brazil's historic narrative of white imperialist patriarchy.

Para os meus pais, Ilzamara e Paulo Sales, minha avó Dona Belmira Gomes da Silva,

e a artista Ivens Machado

"In Brazil there is no racism: the Negro knows his place." [1]

(A popular Brazilian aphorism)

[1] Robert Kent, *Latin America: Regions and People* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2006), 175. This ironic saying reflects the nature of race relations in Brazil, where the affected population accepts the social norms and conditions in which racism thrives.

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INTRODUCTION

In his video performance, *Escravizador-Escravo/ Slavemaster-Slave* (1974), Brazilian artist Ivens Olinto Machado (1942-2015) presents a power struggle between the light-skinned, partially clothed artist and a naked, anonymous Afro-Brazilian man. For eight minutes, the video captures Machado abusing the Afro-Brazilian man on the floor of his studio. Throughout the performance, the Afro-Brazilian man is beaten, tied up, and left to struggle. In his restrictive position, the exasperated man tries to free himself from his bonds. The attempt is in vain, for his aggressor returns and subdues his aggravated captive by holding him down and biting the flesh of his back.

Although the performance centers on the torturous actions perpetrated onto to the Afro-Brazilian man, there is a strong element of homoeroticism. The physicality between the two men and the nature of the abuse are not to injure seriously, but to provoke arousal. It suggests the performance is a consensual and voluntary interaction. Nevertheless, the performance and the title of the video recall the social and political hierarchy of the master-slave dynamic prevailing during the colonial period in Brazil (1532-1889). The two performers act out the authoritative, abusive white master and the feeble, submissive black slave laborer. Using the body as his material, Machado visually composes a video performance between opposing forces that correspond to normative structures of power found in not only racial, but also homosexual, relationships.

In my M.A. thesis, I will argue that Machado's artist video, *Escravizador-Escravo*, aggravates social tensions, utilizing race relations and homoerotic desire to comment on

power dynamics. As a result, Machado's video performance dispels white imperialist patriarchy, specifically the belief in the theory of *racial democracy* in contemporary Brazil. The theory conceptualized by sociologist and historian Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987) in his seminal book *Casa Grande y Senzala (The Masters and The Slaves)* published in 1933 characterizes Brazilian society as one free of racial prejudice and discrimination. Although later scholars such as Florestan Fernandes and Thomas Skidmore have proven Freyre's theory to be faulty for idealizing the paternal relationships between masters and slaves, the idea of racial democracy has become integral to Brazil's cultural and social identity.

This thesis seeks to contribute to scholarship on early experimental video in Brazil, focusing on conceptions of privilege based on race, gender, and alternative representations of kinship between men. Specifically, it is my intention to address the racial dimension in Machado's videos, a perspective that has not been discussed by scholars. For my analysis, I will rely on Freyre's examination and interpretation of race relations between masters and their slaves on sugar plantations in Brazil, the breeding ground for miscegenation. Plantation life prompted cultural, social, and sexual contact between the European masters and their African slaves, laying the foundations for a racially diverse population and consequently a society based on racial hierarchies. Evidenced by the title, Machado beckons an awareness of the historical context of colonial slavery and Freyre's socio-cultural analysis, thus exposing the contradictions within Brazil's political, social, and cultural identity.

A common theme that permeates throughout Machado's work is an interest in manipulating his medium, whether the body, paper and pencil, or rustic materials used in the construction of low-income housing, to present counter arguments for conventional

social and political views in popular culture. After moving to Rio de Janeiro in 1964, Machado studied with Anna Bella Geiger and became a part of the pioneer video artists in Brazil. Before realizing his first videos in 1974, his oeuvre already comprised drawing, collage, engraving, painting, performance, but following his video experiments he is known predominantly for his sculptures.[2] Machado participated four times in the São Paulo Biennial (1981, 1987, 1998, and 2004) and has been shown internationally at institutions such as MAC in São Paulo, MAM in Rio de Janeiro, Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, MOMA and Museo del Barrio in New York, the Centro Internazionale de Brera in Milan, Italy, and many more.[3] Whether examining his sculptures or his poetic videos, his work reflects on social and historical memory through form, materials, and performative gestures.

To date, there does not exist scholarly research on Machado's video *Escravizador-Escravo* and the existing texts about the video focus on the plot without contextualizing the work. A close analysis of *Escravizador-Escravo,* in light of Machado's companion video made the same year, *Versus* (1974), will illuminate Machado's experimentation outside of traditional modes of art making, as a means to interrogate Brazilian political, social, and artistic life in the early 1970s.[4] The use of video as a medium of artistic practice, largely

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[2] Essays by curators Alberto Saraiva and Ligia Canongia in the monograph *Encontro Desencontro* (2008) and *Ivens Machado: Engenheiro de Fábulas* (2001) mention *Escravizador-Escravo* in relation to Machado's larger body of work, largely sculpture. Machado gained notoriety as a sculptor after 1979, when he exhibited the famed piece *Mapa Mudo (Captionless Map),* which presents a map of Brazil projecting shards of broken glass.

[3] To be noted, Machado made another video in 1974 filmed by Jom Azulay titled *Dissolusão (Dissolution),* which centers on his hand holding a pen and continuously signing his autograph on each page of a notebook. Later, he produces videos such as *36': Travessia Barca Rio-Niterói* (*36': Crossing on a Rio-Niterói Boat*) (1976), *Apertando Silvana* (*Squeezing Silvana*) (8', 2007), *Ordem Unida* (*United Order*) (3'55'', 2008), *Encontro-Desencontro* (*Encounter/Unencounter*) (12', 2008), *Paranóia (Paranoia)* (1', 2008).

[4] In addition, *Escravizador-Escravo* was the first of the two videos to be realized on the same video tape. By examining the title cards, which are always situated at the end of the performance (detailing the artist, title, medium, and camera operator) the title card for *Escravizador-Escravo* appears at the beginning of *Versus*. Therefore, the sequence on the physical tape confirms the order of recording.

unexplored and inaccessible in Brazil at this time, reveals the unique capacity to use the camera as a tool for social commentary. Machado's early videos coincide with artistic efforts of the 1970s to challenge normativity, aligning with U.S. Civil Rights and Feminist movements, international LGBT civil rights, as well as the emergence of black consciousness in Brazil propelled by independence in African countries colonized by the Portuguese (Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé e Príncipe, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde). Furthermore, Machado's *Escravizador-Escravo* clarifies the status quo in the Brazilian social order and suggests a reconciliation with those left at the margins (i.e., Afro-Brazilians and homosexuals). By referencing the history of slavery and its effect on the Afro-Brazilian population, his videos call attention to the oppressive paradigms rooted in contemporary Brazil.

ESCRAVIZADOR-ESCRAVO

The video *Escravizador-Escravo* reenacts the collective and traumatic memory of plantation patriarchy and master-slave relations. The video performance insinuates a racial and sexual domination via the exploitation of power over the Afro-Brazilian male body. The video, recorded by cameraman Jom Azulay, begins with a shot of the Afro-Brazilian man, identified as Cesar, lying on the floor of an empty studio.[5] Machado's hands enter the frame massaging and squeezing his back and quickly these sensual actions become more abrasive. Machado begins to slap Cesar's back, chest, and buttocks. Cesar merely tolerates this violent treatment and suggests his compliance in a consensual interaction.

Next, Machado diligently ties Cesar's wrists and ankles behind his back with a single rope. When finished, Machado flips Cesar over to lie on his stomach, leaving him completely constrained. Cesar struggles to return to a comfortable position while Machado is no longer in the video frame. We assume he is watching "off stage," taking pleasure in Cesar's humiliation and degradation. Without the use of his limbs, Cesar fiddles with the rope and experiments with ways to free himself. The video frame further compresses him to the corner of the room, stressing his "enslaved" position. In his restricted state, the viewer senses frustration and irritation building inside Cesar, frequently screeching and grunting.

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[5] Within Ivens Machado's monograph and exhibition catalog at Oi Futuro, Encontro-*Desencontro*, the caption information for *Escravizador-Escravo* identifies the Afro-Brazilian performer as Cesar. Henceforth, I will refer to him as Cesar, Machado's friend, a fellow artist, and his assistant in the early 1970s. *Ivens Machado, Encontro-Desencontro* (Rio de Janeiro: Oi Futuro, 2008).

As we fixate on Cesar's struggling body, the camera suddenly pans over to his head where Machado gags him. Grasping Cesar's head firmly, Machado bites the soft flesh behind his left arm, which initiates an emotional and energetic release for both men. We hear a long moan of ecstasy from Cesar as Machado closes his eyes in fulfillment. The moan becomes loader, the harder Machado bites. The video performance ends when Machado subdues Cesar and releases his bite. The camera lingers on the puddle of saliva left on Cesar's back before fading out of focus.

In this violent yet erotic performance, Machado reifies paradigms of power, utilizing a matrix of bodily signs corresponding to race, gender, and class. A distinct and hierarchal division between the two men arises from racial opposition, white versus black, as well as the level of dress of each performer, naked versus partially clothed. Machado wears bell-bottoms and sandals, providing a temporal reference. Cesar, however, is completely naked, historically a reference to enslavement. No other markers of his identity are accorded to him, with the exception of the color of his skin. In addition, the placement of their bodies in the video frame generates opposition, one lays on the ground while the other enters and exits freely. Dissimilarities between Machado and Cesar solidify Machado's privileged position, as well as prove hierarchical relationship and power play.

The sadomasochistic performance asserts sexual gratification from not only power and control, but danger, risk, and pain. It is the struggle to master Cesar's strong black body that generates a homoerotic pleasure. Also, tensions between the subject and object, between seeing and being seen, also are implied. With Cesar acting as the "object" to be looked upon and admired, Machado places him in the inferior position with no agency to

combat the male unilateral gaze.[6] The camera's lingering gaze over Cesar's sculpted muscles is evidence of a fixation with Cesar's body. Cesar's body is presented as an erotic aesthetic object to resemble the conventional classical male nude. However, here Cesar's body is without context, then confined and defined by the color of his skin. Thus, the voyeuristic view of the black male nude conjures sexual pleasure through racial difference or "Otherness," and prompts the spectator to recall racial, cultural, and sexual meanings surrounding "blackness."[7] Under Machado's authority and the omnipresent eye of the video camera, Cesar is left to be erotized, fetishized, and objectified.[8]

Analyzing the setting and soundtrack in the video sparks a discussion of private rather than public spaces. It begs the question of what type of noises, sounds, or actions are appropriate in private or public places. Apart from the sounds from the performers, commotion from life on the street highlights the intimate setting where these men freely act out their salacious fantasies. Their activity becomes taboo and places *Escravizador-Escravo* in opposition to government-sanctioned artistic production, which I will discuss later in this thesis. This "colonial fantasy" plays upon the familiar rules and identities involved in the legacy of slavery and race relations in Brazil. This "paternal" master-slave relationship suggests a satisfaction in exercising control and the pleasure in submitting to another's will. Ultimately, both parties find satisfaction in the disproportion of power,

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[6] Mercer in her article discusses the particular ways in which black people are viewed and represented. She specifically analyzes Robert Mapplethrope's transgressive photographs of nude black men as cultural artifacts that perpetuate the racial and sexual stereotypes. I see a similar dynamic in *Escravizador-Escravo*, perhaps intentionally to shock the viewer, yet Machado falls victim to the same connotations. Kobena Mercer, "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe," *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 173.

[7] Mercer, "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe," *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, 173.

[8] Mercer, "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe," Ibid.

contradicting the historic narrative recounted by Brazilian sociologist, historian, and writer Gilberto Freyre.

GILBERTO FREYRE AND RACIAL DEMOCRACY

The study of race relations in Brazil, between Afro-Brazilians and Europeans, has commonly been traced back to the colonial era under slavery. Sociologists like Gilberto Freyre reinterpreted the social values and racial domination of the white elite in plantation society to absorb the Afro-Brazilian population into a new sociohistorical ideology. Specifically, the idea of racial democracy suggested by Freyre celebrates the mixture of indigenous, African, and European races as unique to Brazilian society.[9] Central to this ideology is the image of Brazil as a country free from racism or discrimination based on ethnicity, where there is an equal place for everyone in the social order. According to Freyre, the origins of such an idea began with the colonial legacy of the Portuguese. The Portuguese colonizers promoted incorporation of all races rather than the exclusion of specific ethnic groups.[10] Freyre's assumptions about racial mixture supported the idealistic image of the Portuguese as the egalitarian ancestors of Brazil.[11] Credit for such an amiable nature, according to Freyre, was Portugal's geographic proximity to Africa, providing the

[9] The term "racial democracy" was never used in Freyre's book *Casa Grande e Senzala*; however, he did adopt it in later publications. Later scholars popularized the term to describe the racial dynamic in Freyre's work, explaining how Brazil escaped racism and prejudice through the close relations between masters and slaves. In actuality, a German biologist Karl Von Martius conceived the "first version" of racial democracy in 1845 in his essay, "Como se deve escrever a historia do Brasil," (How one should write Brazilian History). Leone Campos de Sousa and Paulo Nascimento, "Brazilian National Identity at a Crossroads: The Myth of Racial Democracy and the Development of Black Identity." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 19 (3/4). Springer: 129–43. Accessed on December 28, 2015, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40206137.
[10] Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 30.
[11] Marx, *Making Race and Nation*, 30.

Portuguese with a predisposition to establishing harmonious relations with those of darker skin.[12] Thus, after beginning colonial expeditions in North and West Africa in the 16th century, their "natural" tendency of maintaining racial tolerance later transferred to their affairs with Brazilians. Yet history demonstrates that slavery in Brazil was far from benign or benevolent. Freyre's reinterpretation of Brazil's past upholds a historical legacy of tolerance, but what remains is a white-dominated socio-political order that has been constituted, normalized, and maintained.

I argue that *Escravizador-Escravo* demonstrates the existence and persistence of a racial hierarchy, one in which whiteness connotes power and a superior racial category. Despite Freyre's idealist and utopian opinion of the benevolent master-slave relations, history supports that the creation of a racially diverse country like Brazil was the result of forced sexual relations with indigenous and African women. In the Portuguese colony, there were few, if any, European women.[13] Consequently, the inevitability of the "cross-racial" sexual practices of heterosexual European men resulted in an increasing number of *mulattos,* or offspring of mixed European and African blood. Although Portuguese Catholicism prohibited the miscegenation between Europeans and Africans, their mandates were ignored.[14] By 1818, Brazil's population was 3.5 million, of which 60 percent were black and 10 percent were *mulatto*.[15] This generated an array of racial categories that ranged from indigenous, mestizos, Afro-Brazilians, mulattos or *pardos,* and European

[12] Specifically, Portugal's early experience with the Moors, the Muslim inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula, who ruled in Portugal from 711 to 1249. Ibid.
[13] In fact, as early as 1732, a law prohibited European women from migrating to the Brazilian colony. Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

descendants.[16] The social hierarchy incorporated all citizens; however, "whiteness" was still the apex of the racial pyramid.

In the late 19th century, a population that was becoming increasingly diverse in skin color generated anxiety among elite Brazilian circles for the number of darker skinned Brazilians outnumbered Brazilians of European descent. When abolition finally arrived in 1888, 41 percent identified as mulatto.[17] Unlike the United States that operated on a bi-racial social order, Brazil's embrace of miscegenation forged fluid racial categories. It is important to note that miscegenation between Europeans and Africans was not deteriorating the white population but was rather whitening (*embranquecimento*) all Brazilians.[18] Lighter skin during the 19th century and still today in Brazil offers more opportunity for social mobility and advancement. This proves "whiteness" equates with a level of education and a skill set not afforded to former slaves after abolition. Mulattos and Afro-Brazilians performed the jobs that were undesirable to the white population becoming janitors, domestic servants, manual laborers, mostly low ranking civil servants. Florestan Fernandes in his book, *The Negro in Brazilian Society* (1965), discusses the existence of Afro-Brazilian socio-economic disparities and maladjustment whilst Freyre's theory of racial democracy was avidly circulated.[19] In postabolition Brazil, initiatives to transition former slaves into active members of the community were nonexistent. Most were illiterate and had no practical skills to apply for paying jobs. In fact, the unfamiliarity or lack of

[16] The word *pardo* and *mestizo* are both terms for those with brown skin, as a result from mixing with African blood in the former and indigenous in the latter. Darlene J. Sadlier, *Brazil Imagined: 1500 to the Present* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), 103.
[17] Marx, 66.
[18] Ibid., 162.
[19] Florestan Fernandes, *The Negro in Brazilian Society*, trans. Jacqueline D. Skiles, A. Brunel, and Arthur Rothewell (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1969), 1-2.

experience with social and cultural behavior prevented them from competing in the socio-economic milieu, in spite of their freedom.[20] Abolitionists did not negotiate the lives of freed slaves; therefore, they continued to work for the same employers for low wages. In addition, Fernandes states that statistics of living conditions, rates of birth, stillborn births, and deaths by disease between mulatto and Afro-Brazilians fostered undesirable conditions for vertical mobility.[21] The lack of official segregation laws did not prevent unofficial racial discrimination and prejudice against Afro-Brazilians.[22] Despite having no concrete infringements to their progress, inequality remained largely unchallenged by Afro-Brazilians until awareness and racial consciousness began in the 1930s, and then solidified in the late 1970s.[23]

The absence of official mandates against racism aided the acceptance of Brazil as a racial paradise. Freyre's interpretation of Brazil's colonial past and legacy of racial tolerance helped to unite the modern nation under one homogenous identity. In conjunction with this promotion of national consciousness, contradictory immigration policies banned African migration but endorsed European immigration to Brazil.[24] From 1870 to 1963, over five million immigrants came to Brazil, motivated by a desire for finding opportunity and work. [25] The importing of whites or *embranquecimento (whitening)* was a characteristic emblematic of a modernized nation. Until 1945, Brazilian legislation dictated

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[20] Fernandes, *The Negro in Brazilian Society*, 44.
[21] Ibid., 58.
[22] Between 1891 and 1907, proposals to create a formal color bar were debated in the Brazilian Parliament but never enforced. Marx, 166.
[23] Formations of resistance appeared as early as the 17th c. as runaway slave communities called *quilombos* to the emergence of the independent black organization *Frente Negra Brasileira* (the Brazilian Black Front) in 1931, later a political party shutdown by Getulio Vargas. These manifestations acted as origins for the stronger *Movimento Negro Unificado* (Unified Black Movement) of the late 1970s.
[24] Ibid., 162.
[25] Ibid.

a preference for immigration that would "develop in the ethnic composition of the population with more desirable characteristics of European ancestry." [26] Therefore, the acceptance of miscegenation gave the hope for a whiter population and social mobility, while also diminishing the potential for Afro-Brazilian solidarity.

From the republic in 1889 to a dictatorship in the 1940s, and later military rule in the 1960s and 1970s, the white elite maintained their oppressive social order with little to no conflict.[27] The racial binary constructed in *Escravizador-Escravo* manifests the discrimination and prejudice faced by Afro-Brazilians in Brazil. Machado acting as the white dominator, abusing his counterpart, the darker skinned Cesar, cites the history of behavior Afro-Brazilians endured. Postabolition Brazil entrenched the colonial social strata into society, with the white elite preserving their place on top. In 1967 and 1976, a study of annual income indicated that Brazilians identifying as white made twice as much compared to those who identified as mulatto or black. [28] Social and political inequalities were still prevalent during the making of Machado's video. Cesar's compliant and consensual attitude reflects the unchallenged prejudice and lack of Afro-Brazilian mobilization, which racial democracy helped to suppress. Freyre's romantic myth and/or revision of the realities of Portuguese colonization diffused conflict and the consequences of difference. It turned the country's inferiority complex, as well as their multiracial past,

[26] Azevedo, *Onda Negra*, 37. Quoted in Ibid.
[27] Without concrete or official racial segregation, there was difficulty in creating mobilization against informal prejudice and discrimination. Ibid., 169.
[28] Ibid., 68.

from a liability to an asset.[29] However, legacy of *democracia racial* was only true in the maintenance of Afro-Brazilians at the bottom of a well-established racial hierarchy.

[29] Ibid., 34.

THE BODY IN PERFORMANCE: *VERSUS* AND *ESCRAVIZADOR-ESCRAVO*

Machado's early videos present an interest in the investigation of social and political relationships. The nature of the videos, featuring elements of violence and homoeroticism, seek to comment on the old traditionalist habits of race relations. To do this, Machado appropriates sexual taboos, namely sexual relations with another man of a different race, to critique normative culture. As in *Escravizador-Escravo,* its companion video *Versus* (1974) conceptually and visually simulates miscegenation, using both the gesture of the camera and the body in performance. *Versus* has been widely discussed in comparison to *Escravizador-Escravo,* and perhaps due to its exhibition frequency, has received more scholarly attention.[30] However, *Versus* was temporarily censured due to the allusion that the men would kiss at the end of the video.[31]

As the title suggests, *Versus*, posits the same actors on opposite ends of the frame as the camera quickly oscillates between the two figures, dislocating them to the left

[30] Governmental and institutional censorship may have contributed to *Escravizador-Escravo*'s obscurity during the early 1970s. These videos would have been seen among the video artist cohort, but also exhibited. At this moment, it is unclear with how much frequency *Escravizador-Escravo*, a video with stronger connotations than *Versus*, was shown. *Versus*, on the other hand, was shown widely at *Prospectiva 74* at Museu de Arte Contemporãnea de São Paulo, *Open Encounter on Video* in Buenos Aires, Argentina, *Ideen aus Brasillien* in Selb, Germany, among others. Consequently, this increased familiarity and circulation of the video as well as its inclusion in academic scholarship. In 2013, *Versus* was acquired by the Centre Pompidou in Paris, France. Interestingly, letters in the archives of the Penn Library hold proof that *Escravizador-Escravo* may have been lost at one point. My archival research of the 1975 exhibition *Video Art* at the Institute of Contemporary Art and the Pennsylvania State Library revealed that many of the Brazilian video artists who participated mistakenly sent the original copies of their tapes.

[31] Ivens Machado and Ligia Canongia, *Ivens Machado: O Engenheiro De Fábulas* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Petrobras Arte Visuais, 2001), 151.

and right of the video screen. Behind the men, a hand-drawn vertical line cuts the white sterile room in half, in order to stress their separation. Breath guides the action of the camera, panning right to Cesar we hear a breath inhaled, and then turning left where Machado exhales. This synchronized action suggests the two men are one entity, surviving on one breath. Their chests rise and fall as they lean against the wall looking forward. Soon the camera's movements quicken, back and forth, blurring the performers' faces and bodies. As if propagated by a centrifuge, we are unable to differentiate the two men. The camera stops and video ends as they turn, grab one another, and meet face to face in the center of the frame.

Although separated in the video, the performance encourages a union between the actors.[32] Regardless of the distance, the camera's movements and synchronized breath attempt to form a rapport between them. The finale of *Versus* invites an assessment of their dissimilarities, as their profiles offer a means of comparison. Where *Escravizador-Escravo* attempts to construct a hierarchy between the performers, *Versus* (1974) achieves their coming together. In both of Machado's videos, we observe the body as a site for the construction of meaning and the formation of new realities produced through the language of the video equipment. In her book, *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, Amelia Jones discusses the ability to understand the body in performance through numerous codes or signs. She states, "The human body is understood differentially depending on its race, legibility of race, its sex, and its perpetual verifiability." [33] Then, the body is a place where we read and confirm numerous aspects of the "self." In observing the body, we recognize

[32] Fernando Cocciharale, "Saber Blefar," in *Ivens Machado: Engenheiro de Fábulas* (São Paulo: Pinoteca de Estado de São Paulo, 2002), 35.
[33]Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 12-13.

characteristics of class, gender, sexuality, race, and other identifications. Thus, the body is not purely a physiological or anatomical entity but also understood through social, racial, and cultural cues. The message recorded by the video becomes powerfully expressed through a corporal instrument invested with and shaped by the experiences of everyday life. I believe Machado follows an artistic tendency of the early 1970s of critically commenting on themes of sexuality, race, and power through the performative body. Ultimately, when witnessing the performers' bodies in *Escravizador-Escravo* and *Versus*, the viewer identifies the racial and behavioral signs, a political debate concerning race, sexuality, and power.

SLAVERY AND RACIAL HEIRARCHY

IN COLONIAL BRAZIL

Slavery in Brazil has had a profound impact on contemporary social, cultural, and political systems. Therefore, examining the ideology and representations of race relations in colonial Brazil will help interpret the status of racial concerns in Brazil during the 1970s. This context will clarify how ideologies of power and race are intertwined, clarifying an embodied definition of authority in society. Furthermore, like *Escravizador-Escravo*, representations of punitive actions against slaves confirm the body's involvement in the exertion of power.

Beginning in 1549, the Trans-Atlantic slave trade forcibly imported more than 4.5 million slaves from West Africa, or today's Angola, Congo, and Mozambique, to Brazil.[34] This massive force of slave labor dominantly supported Brazil's lucrative economy, based on the production and exportation of gold, diamonds, tobacco, cotton, and sugar in the north and coffee in the south.[35] By 1600, over 40 percent of the enslaved were working to produce sugar, supporting Europe's sweet tooth.[36] Accordingly, African slaves worked in horrendous conditions, in many instances dying from exhaustion. The life span among

[34] Marx, *Making Race and Nation,* 49.
[35] The Portuguese were not the only European power vying for territory and resources in Brazil. Other countries such as France and Holland were interested in Brazil as a commercial enterprise. The French competed for control of Brazil in the early 1500s while the Dutch ruled from the North in Pernambuco. The Dutch remained from 1630 until they were ousted in 1654. Ibid., 49.
[36] Ibid., 51.

slaves working in the mines averaged only seven to twelve years.[37] Despite high mortality rates, Brazilian slaveholders still benefited from cheaply imported replacements.[38] The modernization or development of Brazil as a Portuguese colony was contingent on slave labor, no matter the savage conditions of production. The discoveries of resources, the increased agricultural production, and the cheap slave labor reinforced centralized rule under the Portuguese crown.[39]

The seat of government would soon move from Portugal to Rio de Janeiro, in order to secure political and economic potential for the Empire.[40] However, the impending invasion of Napoleon in 1807 made this decision ever more certain. Portuguese ships transported the Prince Regent Dom João VI and his family to Brazil, where he stayed even after the British defeated Napoleon in 1814. The next year, the monarch would elevate and promote Brazil to the status of Portugal.[41] However, the large number of African descendants posed a problem for Brazil's image as a 'modern' nation on par with France and Britain. In a nation historically feared to hold a population of "savage cannibals," having a majority of black or of mixed-race populations signified a less than civilized country. Thus, Dom João VI pushed progress and civilization by funding numerous cultural, artistic, and scientific expeditions.

One such expedition was the invitation of the French Cultural Mission in 1816 to Brazil, which included Napoleon's favorite portrait painter, Jean Baptiste Debret. Along

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[37] The slave population was also heavily affected by disease that decimated their numbers. Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Debret was trained as a strict Neo-Classist, but with the new aesthetic of Romanticism of the 19th century, he experimented while working and documenting day-to-day operations of slavery in Brazil. Ibid.
[40] Suggestions to move to Brazil were made as early as 1762 due to the invasion of the Franco-Spanish Alliance. Sadlier, *Brazil Imagined: 1500 to the Present*, 110.
[41] Marx, 110.

with his fellow artists, the primary goal of the French Cultural Mission was to establish the Institute of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro, where students could learn the fundamentals and latest trends in fine art and architecture, such as Romanticism.[42] This was a major endeavor to develop the nation's cultural and scientific agendas, and therefore, Brazil's identity as a civilized nation.[43] While in Brazil, Debret published his three-volume *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Bresil* (*Picturesque and Historic Voyage to Brazil*), regarded as one of Brazil's most vital art historical documents of the 19th century. Assuming a positivist stance, an empirical and objective method of visual documentation, Debret's *Voyage* details a historical and ethnographic narrative of Brazil's slave-holding society.[44] Art historian Daryle Williams has pointed out that live models, used for academic pedagogy of the idealized human body, were actually first enslaved and later hired free African laborers.[45] This brings light to the fact that not only establishment of Debret's aesthetic practice, but also the civilized façade of Brazil, were problematically born out of the social conditions of 19th-century Brazilian slave society.

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[42] The French mission was to establish the Institute of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro in a few years. However, political controversy between the French and the Portuguese professors prolonged completion to a decade. The Institute opened in 1826. Sadlier, 112.

[43] In Daryle Williams' insightful article "Peculiar Circumstances of the Land: Artists and Models in Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Slave Society," he discusses the lack of academic attention to the relationship between these 'artist-chroniclers' and the expansion of slave-holding Portuguese America in the 19th century. He provides a view into the role of artists and their live models, the establishment of a fine arts tradition in Brazil, set against Brazilian slave society. More in Daryle Williams, "Peculiar Circumstances of the Land: Artists and Models in Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Slave Society," *Association of Art Historians*, 35, no. 4 (September 2012), 702-727.

[44] Originating in the 19th and 18th century, French philosopher, sociologist, and founder of the positivist movement Auguste Comte believed that true reality was found through empirical verification. Thus, positivist artists of the 18th and 19th centuries, much like scientists, argued for the direct observation of natural phenomena to discover truth, rejecting intuition and introspection. See Paul Barolsky, "Art History and Positivism," *Notes in the History of Art*, 18, no.1 (Fall 1998), 27-30. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23205032.

[45] Due to lack of resources, art professors turned to their own slave-owning houses or the urban market for live black models, although this would soon change as free immigrant labor became available in the 1880s, blacks were displaced as employment prospects declined. See: Williams, "Peculiar Circumstances of the Land," 710.

19th Century Brazil: Images of Slavery

Since the beginning of colonization in Brazil, artists shaped the imaginings for European consumers of life in the New World, never relaying the realistic conditions of enslavement of the indigenous peoples and Africans brought to Brazil. For instance, during Dutch occupation in the 17th century, Dutch colonizers created many picturesque and idyllic images of Brazil. The Dutch landscape painter Frans Post, who sailed to Brazil with Prince Maurits in 1636, made a lucrative career obliging his Dutch clientele with scenes of Brazilian agriculture, especially sugarcane plantations and processing mills, as well as scenes depicting Dutch seats of government and places of worship.[46] An example of Post's scenic landscape paintings, *Plantation Scene* (1655), shows a majestic view of a rural plantation house, surrounded by Brazil's lush flora. African slaves leisurely speckle the land around the plantation, singing and dancing while they work. Post's paintings supported the idea of Brazil as a tropical paradise waiting to be cultivated. As a result and without surprise, Post omits the harsh truths of enslavement.[47]

Like Post, Jean Baptiste Debret was capable of producing serene, pastoral representations of Brazil, like the traditions of Dutch still life.[48] Debret's aesthetic practice remains honest, combining the picturesque while still portraying the endurance of slave's suffering and trauma. Hence, his renderings of plantation life, particularly the observation

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[46] Sadlier, 71.

[47] Prince Maurits, who was eager to attract settlers to the colony, commissioned many of Post's paintings. His representations served as a testaments to Brazil's natural "beauty and bounty" awaiting them in the New World. Ibid., 72.

[48] Within his oeuvre, Debret painted beautiful annotated natural specimens, the exotic flora and fauna of Brazil. These scientific and objective studies, which were used for his large-scale oil paintings, differ from his sketchbook drawings. Wood argues that his careful reproductions of fragments of sugar cane plants points to an empathetic metaphor for slave life and suffering. Marcus Wood, "Slavery and the Romantic Sketch: Jean Baptiste Debret's Visual Poetics of Trauma," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 43 (2014): 44.

of black nakedness, reflect an understated empathy for slaves. Often cited to elucidate the brutalities of indentured servitude, Debret's work expresses the socio-economic status of the black body when subject to horrific disciplinary practices.[49] Debret's lithograph, *Plantation Overseers Discipline Blacks,* presents the common and atrocious public whippings. [50] The overwhelming visual experience of such physical violence was a means to influence the viewer or object of the punishment from committing future indiscretions. The reasons for such punishment varied, but were commonly carried out for insubordination, perceived transgressions, or as an assertion of dominance of the overseer. Prohibitions on masters killing or injuring their slaves were largely ignored. For example, implementation of laws against pervasive whipping was only enacted two years before abolition in 1888, as a response to the deaths of two slaves after they received 300 lashes.[51] Other devices of chastisement included wooden paddles to beat slaves' hands or the full-face iron masks with muzzles to restrict slaves from talking, eating, and to prevent the vice of drinking excessively.[52] Consequently, these strategies reinforced the master's ability to control slave laborers while reaffirming his own superiority. Hence, slaves endured ample brutal treatment, reinforcing the idea of the "black" slave as the degraded object of violence. The behavior portrayed in Debret's graphic renderings as well as in Machado's

[49] Marcus Wood argues in his article that Debret's visual archive of slave society was intended to conjure abolitionist support among the elite in Britain and North America, revealing the suffering slaves endured. However, due to lack of knowledge, these romantic images invited the sadomasochistic fantasies and voyeuristic pleasures of white readers. Marcus Wood, "Slavery and the Romantic Sketch: Jean Baptiste Debret's Visual Poetics of Trauma," 39.

[50] This image, first an *aquarela xi* watercolor painting before it was published, is featured in volume two of Debret's *Voyage Pittoresque et Historique au Bresil*. This volume focuses on the working and living conditions of Afro-Brazilian slaves. Daryle Williams notes a lack of scholarship in examining Debret's work in relation to his opinion of slavery. Williams, "Peculiar Circumstances of the Land," 710.

[51] Marx, 51.

[52] Suicide was common amongst slaves, who would poison themselves by drinking large quantities of liquor, or choke themselves by eating dirt. To prevent them from performing acts of suicide, masters put masks on their faces, which had only a very narrow slit in front of the mouth and a few holes under the nose so they could breathe. These punishment tactics are discussed at length in Sadlier's text. Sadlier, 106.

video secures this fact and demonstrates insignificance of the slave, occupying the lowest racial stratum of a society.

Machado's abuse and manipulation of his "slave" in the *Escravizador-Esravo* portrays the horrific treatment slaves endured on a daily basis. This is indicative of a political and economic value system in which the body becomes the site for exercising power. In his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975), French theorist Michel Foucault discusses the act of torturing the body as a strategy implemented in a capitalistic system. I cite Foucault's writing on torture as a means to interpret Machado's exertion of disciplinary power over the body, observing the "techno-politics of punishment," or violent strategies that involve the body in an economic value system. Accordingly, slaves' bodies were not appreciated for their humanity, but for their production rate. Black bodies translate into currency. Therefore, addressing mechanisms of power exercised on the body proposes it as a locus for political and economic paradigms, especially the black body. Visual representations of this violence and abuse suggest both the slave's inferior position, as well as their instrumental role in Brazil's proto-capitalist economy. [53]

Despite disparities in time, context, and the audience of Debret's and Machado's artworks, a comparison between Debret's illustration and Machado's video performance highlights similarities in exerting violence on the body of the slave, implying the colonization of the black body, and visually constructing a racial hierarchy. Historic images, such as those of Debret, are pervasive in Brazil, and include representations within literary examples from that of 19th century writer and poet Joaquim Maria Machado de

[53] There is recent debate surrounding the extent to which slave labor systems on large plantations of the Caribbean and Brazil anticipated, or defined, capitalist modes of dividing labor and production. For detailed consideration of the question of capitalist modes of production in Brazil's sugar industry, see S.B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550 e 1835*, Cambridge, 1986.

Assis to contemporary telanovelas (soap operas) *Sinhá Moça* (*The Landowner's Daughter*) (1986 and 2006), *A Escrava Isaura (Isaura the Slave)* (1976 and 2004), *Escrava Mãe* (*Slave Mother*) (2015), and films such as *Xica da Silva* (1976 and telanovela 1996).[54] The familiarity with the history of slavery in Brazil instilled awareness of the violent and demeaning nature of interactions between masters and their slaves.

Debret's *Overseer Disciplining Blacks* produces a distinction between punisher and the punished. The image presents a clothed European plantation manager brandishing a large whip, towering over a naked Afro-Brazilian slave on a rural plantation. Compositionally, the overseer's prominent body stands in the center of the landscape, as his arm wielding a whip reaches toward the sky. This is a drastic contrast to the naked Afro-Brazilian slave cowering in the lower left corner of the image. He awaits the whip's harsh descent, his limbs bound and intertwined around a wooden rod.[55] Within the composition, the Afro-Brazilian slave sits on the ground line, directly underneath the slave dwellings in the distance. His proximity to and scale in the landscape symbolize his low socio-economic rank.

The violence exhibited in Debret's lithograph, and revisited in Machado's video performance, reinforces the appalling treatment of slaves. In Debret's illustration, one witnesses the cruelty of violence performed on a helpless individual. In the foreground, the

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[54] Machado de Assis, regarded as one of the greatest writers of Brazilian literature, illuminates social and economic issues of slavery in his short story "Pãe contra Mãe," as the protagonist Cândido Neves captures a runaway slave. *Sinhá Moça* and *A Escrava Isaura* were telenovelas, relaunched in the early 2000s centering on abolitionist romances. Alongside the dramatized romances, many of these television productions deal with the reality of suffering, injustice, even daily life endured by slave men and women. However, it is interesting to note that the romances in these novellas center on the white or mulatta protagonist women, who are thought to have more social mobility.

[55] The slave's torturous posture in Debret's illustration is called the "Pau de Arara" or "Macaw's Perch," a common strategy of physical torture which causes extreme joint and muscle pain. Originating with slave traders, this technique was later taken up the agents of police during military dictatorship (1964-1985), against political dissidents of the government.

slave's face is pained, crunched, and his fresh wounds exposed. This arrangement reappears in Machado's video performance as it reduces the performer's movement to the corner of the room while his body is crammed inside the video frame. We look upon Machado's profile like the plantation overseer, as he moves over the slave. The violence in Debret's illustration erupts not only from the aggressive action, but also from the constrained and compressed composition, which again presents the slave as insignificant and vulnerable.

Equally important, both the video performances and Debret's image present a vital juxtaposition between being dressed and being naked. This characteristic further points to each individual's position in a socio-political hierarchy, defined by the freedom to wear quality clothing or the lack thereof. For instance, in Debret's image, the middle ground depicts a group of slaves performing lashings on one of their own. Moving to the right from a fully clothed figure, each person becomes increasingly more naked. When we reach the tree, the punished is entirely naked. His state of dress and exposure separates him from those acting as the punishers. Familiar with these visual attributes of slavery in Debret's portrayals, the viewer reads the same signifiers of who is wielding power in *Escravizador-Escravo*. The representation of race becomes conflated with class, characteristics of blackness equate poverty. [56] In comparing both representations, we gain a perspective into the construction of a racialized order, where the position of the black slave is at the bottom. Consequently, the portrayals of black bodies are sexualized and abused, but above all, instrumental to the white elite. Slavery embedded racial discrimination and white patriarchy into the social fabric of Brazilian national identity, lingering during the

[56] Rafael Cardoso, "The Problem with Race in Brazilian Painting, c. 1850-1920," *Association of Art Historians* 38, no. 3 (June 2015): 500.

construction of a national identity after abolition and declaration of the Republic. The Brazilian self-image was a projection that citizens of all colors had equal opportunities for social mobility. Nevertheless, Afro-Brazilian slaves and free men emerged greatly underprivileged and deprived of the social and economic means to participate in society. *Escravizador-Escravo* reflects this reality and by doing so, breaks the pervasive theory of racial hegemony or racial democracy.

GENDER AND PERFORMANCE

As stated before, the viewer watching *Escravizador-Escravo* observes the performance through racial means, the opposition of a white man and black man. However, other signs point to the eroticism that emerges between two men. Here I will analyze the nature of the sexual interaction and the emergence of homosexual subcultures in Brazil in the 1970s. In doing so, I will demonstrate an alternative definition of sexuality and gender in Machado's video, which can be attributed to the representation of a postmodern subjectivity.

The sexual nature of the performance surfaces from the sensual but carnal interaction. The handling of Cesar's body, their nakedness, and the sounds of moans, grunts, and sighs of relief achieves an arousing effect. The sequence of events builds steadily until the moment of orgasmic release, signaled by Machado's bite. The bite insinuates the final kiss between the two men. After foreplay and struggle, the bite embodies the achievement of satisfaction. Nevertheless, it is the cameraman's framing of the scene and his engagement with Cesar's body that produces sexual eroticism in the video. Azulay's voyeuristic perspective and proximity of the camera on Cesar's body makes apparent Machado's affinity for or fascination with darker skin. Machado's hands massaging and slapping Cesar's body offers a fetishistic view of the exotic, dark skinned body.

In *Versus*, the framing of the actors' bodies and performative actions produce

sensuality. Although these men never touch in the beginning of the performance, we can hear their synchronized breathing in the video, suggesting a corporeal union and intimacy. The men stand against the wall as our viewpoint, provided by the camera, is from the waist up and looking forward. In this way, the composition within the frame is reminiscent of the homosexual interaction in Andy Warhol's 1963 short film *Blow Job*, which shows a close up of a man's face; his expressions insinuate he is receiving fellatio.[57] In contrast, *Versus* exposes both men to the camera while the camera's movement facilitates a physical union. Both *Versus* and *Escravizador-Escravo* use visual and conceptual means to allude to homosexual practices.

Both video performances provide an alternative representation of sexuality, while still adhering to traditional gender roles. Heteronormative gender roles still define homosexual relationships, keeping with definitions of hierarchy and authority.[58] As witnessed in *Escravizador-Escravo*, this divides the participants into two categories: the active, masculine penetrator and the penetrated, passive female. This structure adheres to the traditional, patriarchal as well as misogynistic notions of feminity. *Escravizador-Escravo* shows Machado playing the role of the masculine dominant as he roughly handles the effeminized submissive played by Cesar. According to this model, same-sex erotic

[57] Andy Warhol's 35-minute film *Blow Job* (1964) features a steady shot of the face of actor DeVeren Bookwalter as he supposedly receives a blow job. Roy Grundmann discusses this work in relation to art history, film theory, queer studies, and cultural studies. See Grundmann's *Andy Warhol's Blow Job* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).

[58] It is important to note that the organization of the active/passive gender system prevailing in Brazil and in other Latin American countries varies from that of Western Europe and the United States. The development of homosexual identities in Brazil includes many complexities that an overarching model that compares global homosexuality risks the creation of an "us-them" model. James Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 6.

activities use the gendered binary of femininity and masculinity, where the feminine male holds an inferior social position. In the Brazilian context, this dualism is split into the "active" *homen* ("real" man), or referred to by the slang term *bofe*, while the counterpart is the "passive" *bicha* (fairy).[59] Moreover, the sexual act is described as *dar/comer* or giving/receiving.[60] The "giver" or the active male, who anally penetrates his partner maintains the social status as a "real" man, whereas the "receiver" or passive male acquires the stigma of a homosexual.[61] Machado's *Escravizador-Escravo* fortifies Cesar's lower position as not only an Afro-Brazilian man, but also attributing his position to a socially disadvantaged passive male. The performance in *Escravizador-Esravo* reproduces the gender norms accorded to males and females, yet the involvement of two men undermines the expectations of normative male sexuality.

The performers in *Escravizador-Escravo* act out gender roles that correspond to conventional social mores. However, gender at its essence is a performance, a set of gestures and behaviors performed in accordance to particular standards. Judith Butler describes it as "a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint." [62] In other words, we perform gender in adherence to a set of societal, cultural restrictions, standardizations, or norms. This in itself implies a power structure, and the desire to regulate and normalize. Still, it is important to state that gender is not predetermined.[63] It is an abstract concept

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[59] James Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 6.

[60] The organization, conceptualization, and utilization of the terms "dar/comer" can refer to both male/female and same-sex sexual partners. Terms in the sexual universe used in Brazil are constantly constructed, reconstructed, and used interchangeably to apply to males or females. However, the inherent implications of hierarchy or active/passive do not change. Richard Parker, *Beneath the Equator: Cultures of Desire, Male Homosexuality, and Emerging Gay Communities in Brazil* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 30.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

[63] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 2.

branded with what we consider masculine and feminine identities to be through hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative characteristics.[64] Accordingly, Machado's video performance replicates a male-female relationship by performing specific behaviors that personify female or male gender identity. Nevertheless, the performances question gender definitions by revealing a male-on-male sexual relationship, a characteristic not associated with the identity of the traditional patriarchal male. Thus, Machado pluralizes sexuality linked to masculinity, transgresses the borders of gender, and confirms the video as an early representation of homosexuality in Brazil during the 1970s.

Through play and performance, artists like Machado who were interested in performance art in the late 1960s and early 1970s sought to interrogate normative representations of sexuality, offering the possibility of resistance and inclusion.[65] Performance art as an artistic medium permits fluidity and alternative perspectives, allowing for a critique of gender ideals. As Machado presents a homosexual relationship in his video performances, it is important to understand the history of homosexuality and the formation of gay identity in Brazil during the early 1970s. At this point in my discussion, I will focus on Rio de Janeiro, where the early video artists lived and worked. The late 1970s saw the explosion of international movements for gay civil rights where gay and lesbian subcultures brought awareness to the consolidation of a collective identity. Nationally, spaces for representation of homosexuality in Brazil were evolving and expanding.

[64] Ibid.,10.
[65] Ibid., 4.

HOMOSEXUALITY IN BRAZIL

During the 1889 republican regime, the laws that prohibited homosexual activity were not strict. In colonial Brazil, under Dom Pedro I, sodomy or anal penetration of a man or woman up was illegal until the 19th century.[66] However, it was in 1830 that the new Imperial Penal Code decriminalized sexual relations between consenting individuals.[67] The Brazilian code in 1890 did, however, punish acts of public indecency. Homosexual activities were thought to be "assaults on modesty, offending propriety with shameless exhibitions or obscene acts or gestures, practices in public places or places frequented by the public and which without offense to the individual honesty of the person, assaults and scandalizes society." [68] Thus, those who participated in same-sex sexual encounters on the street risk arrest by law enforcers sweeping the neighborhood.[69] The Catholic Church also condemned same sex as a "nefarious sin," fueling opinions of immorality and sexual deviancy about same-sex erotic relations.[70] Although homosexuality itself was legal, the Brazilian government sought to contain and control such behavior. Despite actions to eradicate these forms of conduct, interactions on the street represented the defiance of normative social codes in 19th-century Brazilian society. In the early 20th century, spaces for homosexual activity in urban centers, such as the *Praça Tiradentes* in

[66] James Green, *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth Century Brazil*, 21.
[67] Ibid., 22.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 23.
[70] Ibid., 111-2.

the Belle Époque of Rio de Janeiro, existed in close proximity to the theaters, cafes, brothels, and public boardinghouses. The sporadic regulation of female prostitutes in these downtown locations fostered a space catering to single men in search of their own sexual escapades. Men from various social classes and of different races met in the darkened theaters, on the benches, or around trees seeking other men.[71] The first decades of the Republic saw a vibrant world of men, prostitutes, and bohemian figures, who creatively used public spaces to enjoy their secret pleasures.[72] When migration, immigration, and urbanization of Rio from 1900-1940 increased the population by 157 percent, this facilitated the construction of new spaces for same-sex erotic adventures. [73] In the 30s and 40s, the downtown neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro became regular destinations for men seeking sex with other men. Specifically, in the 1950s and 60s, Copacabana became a hotspot, presenting a lifestyle of entertainment, socializing, and cruising; the image of a beachfront city with glamorous nightclubs and easy sex.[74] The gathering of young homosexual men in these locations implied the beginning of an emerging subculture, a group of people searching for kinship.

Although there was a noticeable presence and emergence of public spaces for homosexual activity in republican Brazil, the need to sneak around in dark corners of cinemas and parks suggested the impropriety of homosexuality in society. Moreover, it spoke to the difference in accepted social behavior in private and public spheres. Nevertheless, those who did not wish their families to know of their alternative lifestyle

[71] Ibid., 25.
[72] Ibid., 60.
[73] The statistic shows that the number of inhabitants rose in Rio de Janeiro from 691,565 to 1,764,141. Ibid., 67.
[74] Ibid., 157.

found opportunity on the street to behave naturally and commune with others who shared the same pleasures. Homosexuality, believed to be a menace to decorum, prompted intellectuals to study the "disease" to diagnose, control, and purge it from Brazilian society. The historian James Green discusses the theories that circulated in Brazil's urban centers from the 20s through the 40s, regarding the diagnosis of homosexuality as a pathological and biological disease.[75] Physicians, psychiatrists, and criminologists developed methods of "controlling, containing, and curing" this social plague. [76] In the discussion of how best to purify the Brazilian nation and rid it of its social ailments, homosexuality was examined for its degenerative nature. Those that suffered from it were defective and possessed an undefined sexual identity that threatened the moral order.[77] Many were categorized as "confused of masculine and feminine characters, which should be separate." [78]

Definitions of gender identity began to change and develop in the mid-20th century, which accompanied economic stability in Brazil.[79] Expansion of homosexual spaces both in the community and in print contributed to the solidarity of new sexual identities. Publications catering to homosexual subject matter actively contributed to a collective gay

[75] Ibid., 110.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 116.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Between the years 19680-1980, a period referred to as an "milagre economico" or an economic miracle, Brazil changed drastically from a rural country (55 percent living in rural areas) to a majority urban country (67 percent living in cities). Direct government involvement in the economy led to massive development projects, such as the industrial and energy sectors. After the oil crisis in 1973, Brazil had accrued the most debt compared to any other country in the world. Brazil continued borrowing from foreign lenders to manage their projects, but in 1979, the energy crisis led to recession and hyperinflation. Peter T. Kilborn, "Brazil's Economic 'Miracle' and its Collapse," New York Times, November 26, 1983, accessed March 5, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/26/business/brazil-s-economic-miracle-and-its-collapse.html?pagewanted=all.

identity. The journal with the most influence, despite is relatively short run (July 1963 to June 1969), was *O Snob* (The Snob), a forty page private publication distributed to acquaintances and friends in areas such as Cinêlandia and Copacabana.[80] The issues included drawings of female fashion models, gossip columns, short story contests, and interviews with famous drag stars.[81] *O Snob* provided a view into the world of *bichas*, *bofes, bonecas* (dolls), and *entendidos* (those in the know). More importantly, the journal offered perspectives into different notions of gender, especially the debates that emerged around them in the 1960s.[82] Rio de Janeiro received worldwide press for the pageants, drag ball, and pre-Lenten festivities of Carnival, which created a familiarity with homosexuality, opening up social and sexual mores in the 1960s, and a progressive attitude toward sexuality.

While Machado's video performances do not take place during Carnival, they do play with subverting authority within sexuality accepted behaviors and racial contexts. Machado's two videos demonstrate the power of using both race and sexuality to investigate relationships. *Escravizador-Escravo,* the first of the two, exemplifies the reality of normative gender and racial frameworks, while *Versus* remedies the violent and separatist interaction. We witness an inversion, where one demonstrates the abuse and exploitation within relationships, the other forces the viewer to examine a commonality

[80] The writers of *O Snob* shut down because of the political climate under General Médici (1969-1974). It was not the first privately crafted publication but was the longest lasting and most influential. Green, 184.
[81] Ibid.
[82] The 1960s noted an emergence of a new middle class gay identity, *entendidos,* or a self-identity that reflected a public persona. It was an adoption of an egalitarian sexual behavior with traditional hierarchical *homem*/*bicha* interplay. At this time, it was used as a coded expression among homosexuals, identifying individuals and places. There were debates and tension between sexual identities, *bichas*, *bofes*, and *entendidos*. These had an impact on how one represented and negotiated their subculture. Ibid., 186-7.

between the two men, literally fusing the two actors. They exhibit a fluid exchange of power, undermining the traditional definitions of master/slave, dominant/submissive, symbolically challenging phallocentric obsession in patriarchal images of kinship, which are defined by biological reproduction.[83] Through sexual deviance and perversion, Machado attempts to transcend normalization and institutionalization of political power that confine individual construction of the self.

By 1964, gays solidified spaces in Carnival and public establishments, but military rule threatened homosexual sociability in 1969-1972.[84] The year of 1968 began with student protests against authoritarianism and harsh governmental decrees or as institutional acts that suspended many guaranteed civil rights. The passing of Institution Act #5 (AI #5) in 1969 created a discouraging effect on the visual arts and creative productions, particularly in theaters.[85] Nevertheless, after 1972, Brazilian places of entertainment, both gay and straight, operated relatively freely, and nightlife in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo witnessed an expansion.[86] Green discusses the contradiction of the political climate and thriving nightlife as an intended political strategy of the military regime. [87] Specifically, the military dictatorship intended to maintain a relatively free environment, as long as it did not comment publicly on their policies.[88] For the most part, the international gay

[83] Kinship is defined by genealogical or familial ties, essentially by procreation. Nevertheless, just as Eve Sedgwick in *Epistemology of the Closet* (2008) attempts to understand the gender binaries that exist in the conceptions of homosexuality (male/female roles), I argue that sexual relationships or the construction of kinship can also transcend these social conventions. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
[84] Green, 246.
[85] Ibid., 248
[86] Ibid.
[87]Claudia Calirman. *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 61-62.
[88] Green, 248.

movement in the late 1970s was not a pertinent concern of the Brazilian military regime. It was important for the government to thwart opponents in artistic and literary circles, who openly critiqued government procedures. Consequently, the regime strategically censored only certain individuals and organizations. In fact, just the fear of arrest or even torture led most liberal groups such as early homosexual activist organizations to disband.[89] The discrepancy between freedom and repression in Brazil exposes the underlying concern of maintaining the public view of decency and decorum. The prohibition of controversial subjects, sexual imagery, and political content from the public's view ignited a new creative energy. [90] Cultural figures and artists sought alternative methods and resources to transcending governmental limitations.[91] Consequently, the Brazilian artistic community experimented with innovative mediums and techniques, such as body art, earthworks, performance art, and even video art, to intervene and contest the current political, social, and cultural landscape.

[89] Ibid, 246.
[90] Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship* 12.
[91] Within the musical sector, composers and singers of *Tropicália*, the popular musical movement during the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, creatively "digested" musical traditions, foreign and domestic, to generate a critical message of the dictatorship. The basis for their philosophy was *Antropófagia* or cultural cannibalism, a concept coined by the modernist poet and writer Oswald de Andrade in the 1920s.

EARLY VIDEO ART IN BRAZIL

The cultural and social image of Brazil during the 1970s was a contradiction between modernity and socio-economic inequality.[92] The military dictatorship under General Medici projected a picture of a modern nation, using the media conglomerate Globo to promote political propaganda.[93] Censorship was a crucial strategy in deflecting negative images or opinions of the government, later used to dictate what qualified as "good taste" on television.[94] Consequently, television was paramount in broadcasting and communicating to the people of Brazil, and integrating all regions.[95] The importance of television in Brazilian social life rose steadily since the 1950s to reach a height in 1970 with the live broadcast of Brazil's third World Cup victory.[96] Similar to the nationalistic agenda of racial democracy, the government maintained a façade of a peaceful and orderly country, using television to produce a generation of passive consumers.

Early practitioners of video art emerged to comment directly on television programming, which presented itself as an instrument of the government. For this reason, video artists sought to work outside of the commercial circuit of television, operating

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[92] Elena Shtromberg, "Television" in *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 100.
[93] Shtromberg, "Television" in *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s*, 100.
[94] Justified by the preoccupation for the wellbeing of Brazil, Institutional Act #5 suspended civil rights, reinstated capital punishment, and established specialized military courts for the sole purpose of trying subversive individuals. The major act in censorship allowed the government full control of what was allowed on television. In consequence, the passing of AI#5 drastically changed the social and cultural output of Brazil.
[95] Shtromberg, "Television" in *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s*, 100.
[96] Ibid., 97.

without central broadcasting, actively opposing government censorship. The commercial availability of the Sony Portapak in 1973 in Brazil allowed artists to create their own messages in relation to the realties they experienced.[97] The size and portability of the video camera allowed artists to work individually, projecting their recorded material onto the television screen, and thus making for a very singular and intimate viewing experience. Experimenting with video in Brazil required the availability of resources, particularly tapes, editing tables, and a video equipment, much of which was not widely available outside of television stations. Unlike in the United States where video equipment was more accessible, the cost of video allowed only a small portion of the population in Brazil to acquire video equipment.[98] Although the use of television in art began as early as 1967 with Helio Oiticica's installation *Tropicalia* at the New Brazilian Objectivity exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, collective collaboration with the new medium began in 1974.[99]

In 1974, the pioneers of video art in Rio de Janeiro gained access to this new medium through a former cultural attaché Jom Azulay, a contact of Machado's former teacher and fellow artist Anna Bella Geiger. Azulay, a filmmaker, shared his half-inch Sony PortaPak with the Rio de Janeiro group of artists, which included Ivens Machado, Anna Bella Geiger, Paulo Herkenhoff, Sônia Andrade, Letícia Parente, Fernando

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[97] Ibid., 102.
[98] Elena Shtromberg, "Bodies in Peril: Enacting Censorship in Early Brazilian Video Art (1974–1978)," in John C. Welchman, ed., *The Aesthetics of Risk: SoCCAS Symposium*, vol. 3 (Zurich: JRP/Ringler, 2008).
[99] Figures in the early study of video included Vilém Flusser (1920–1991), a Czech philosopher who taught communications in São Paulo at the Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado and the University of São Paulo's School of Art and Communications. Artists such as Rubens Gerchman (1942-2008), who participated with Hélio Oiticica in the New Brazilian Objectivity exhibition in 1967, also were responsible for the early emergence of video in early 1970s. Information about his projects with fellow artist José Roberto Aguilar have been lost and no evidence to their content exists. More information on this can be found in Elena Shtromberg's book *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s*, 105.

Cocchiaralle, Angelo de Aquino, and Miriam Danowski. Through Geiger's initial interest in the medium, this group of artists gathered in Geiger's home for weekly screenings and informal discussions about the communicative potential of video. Unlike the superficial staging of reality in television broadcasting, in video art "the camera becomes a character, open to reality, to chance, and to the world." [100] Machado's videos, much like those of his colleagues, exhibits the capturing "live situations" where the camera-in-hand comes face to face with a live scenario, and later transmits that message to the viewer. In this way, early video differs from film in its ability to capture reality and immediately transmit information. The conception of film, on the other hand, is embedded in fiction and the creation of meaning happens at a far slower pace. [101] Viewing these early video experiments reveals a juxtaposition between fiction and reality, planned performances recorded in real time and with a camera in a fixed position. Yet the act of filming was never solely documentary for early video artists in Brazil; rather it was a critical investigation of broader social realities. Curator and art historian Walter Zanini described how these video artists were "trained on an inter-semiotic level," relying on signs, symbols, or gestures to convey a concept or idea. [102] Thus, the video screen functions as the intermediary between the spectator and the live performance, on which the viewer reads or realizes the artistic message. The definition of early video art in Rio de Janeiro detailed the performing of symbolic gestures to communicate a shared experience, corresponding to themes of censorship, torture, repression, and violence.

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[100] Ivana Bentes in Arlindo Machado, *Made in Brasil: Tres décadas do video/Three Decades of Brazilian Video* (Sao Paulo: Itau Cultural), 156.
[101] Walter Zanini, "Video Art: An Open Poetics," in Arlindo Machado, *Made in Brasil: três décadas do vídeo brasileiro/three decades of Brazilian Video* (São Paulo: Itaú Cultural), 52-53.
[102] Zanini, "Video art: An Open Poetics," *Made in Brasil: três décadas do vídeo brasileiro/Three Decades of Brazilian Video*, 302-3.

The early video artists make use of their own bodies to address the strains of their everyday lives. Their performances range from simple acts of ascending staircases to acts of auto-violence such as sewing the sole of one's foot or drinking large quantities of *pinga* in a short period of time.[103] Art historian Elena Shtromberg discusses "the body as a site for exposing tension" within society, particularly under authoritarian regimes. [104] Thus, the body becomes the receptor of the social, cultural, and political repression under the military dictatorship. For that reason, these early video experiments actively engage the viewer's corporeal experience.[105] The spectators of Machado's videos, for example, may feel horror, confusion, anxiety, or even arousal. The expressive behaviors would undoubtedly provoke the average viewer and disturb the government's censors. These videos then activate the viewer's environment, implicating and calling them to witness the effects of authoritarianism. Unlike the passive consumption of television, viewing the pioneers' transgressive acts in their videos underscored the potential to jolt the viewer out of their complacency.

Ultimately, Machado's *Escravizador-Escravo* and *Versus* highlight the bodies of two people to comment on racial and sexual relations within society. I argue that Machado's early videos differ from the work of those of the other video pioneers, for they

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[103] One of the most haunting videos of this group is Leticia Parente's *Marca Registrada* (Trademark) (1974), where the artist seemingly sits down to perform a mundane sewing exercise and proceeds to sew the words "Made in Brasil" on to the sole of her foot, a poignant comment on the commodification of Brazilian citizens under the military dictatorship. The other video mentioned is Geraldo Anhaia Mello's *A Situação* (The Situation) (1978) where the artist sets up a mock TV newscast and satirically reports on the political, economic, social, and cultural situation of Brazil. He drinks large amounts of *pinga*, a sugar cane liquor with high alcohol content, and progressively becomes more inebriated until he finally is unable control himself.

[104] Shtromberg quoting art critic Nelly Richard in *Bodies in Peril: Enacting Censorship in Early Brazilian Video Art (1974–1978)*, 275.

[105] They also drew from the theories of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who argued in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) that our perception of the world comes from an integrated experience of the space around us. In the same way, the Brazilian Neoconcrete artists concentrated on art's capacity to alter perceptions when interacting with a work of art. Calirman, 14.

do not exhibit the artist alone in front of the camera. Instead of a narcissistic perspective, Machado focuses on shared relations with Cesar as metaphor to investigate paradigms of power, gender, race, and sexuality.

The early video artists in Brazil are just one case study that demonstrates the state of art making surrounding the political and social context in late 1969 and early 1970s. A pivotal moment in the Brazilian art world was the 1969 international boycott of the X Sao Paulo Biennial, which pressed Brazilian artists' involvement and gave prominence to local exhibitions.[106] Indeed, the boycott of the Biennial revoked Brazil's exposure to international artists and trends in Europe and North America, forcing artists to experiment with new aesthetics and ways of expression to address political repression.[107] Manifestations of this new aesthetic in Brazil in the early 1970s demonstrated a preoccupation with "anti-aesthetics" or a defiant statement of art making.[108] Given the political, social, and cultural situation in Brazil, artists rejected easy consumption and critically acclaimed definitions of beauty.[109] Machado's contemporaries such as Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, Lygia Pape, Anna Maria Maiolino, Rubens Gerchman, Iole de Freitas, and Cildo Meirles leaned towards nontraditional art making, emphasizing ephemerality and inexpensive materials. Other alternatives like body art and performance, which emerged internationally during the 1960s and 70s, defied archaic frameworks of art, blurred artistic boundaries, and evaded government censorship.

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[106] Ibid., 35-6.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., 42-43.
[109] Avant-garde movements like Concrete movement in the 1950s were criticized for being excessively sterile, mechanical, and privileged the artwork as commodity. Ibid., 14.

Performance art, a live-action-based medium, presents artist's gestures or actions, often recorded, photographed, or filmed.[110] In Brazil, as in many other countries, artists deployed performance as a transgressive social and political tool to defy limitations and constrictions that resulted from government censorship, in art and in life. This artistic practice offered the possibility of an active exchange between the artist and the spectator, altering normative and static viewership. In fact, performance carried the belief in the capacity of art to redeem and even transform humanity. [111] One of the most famous and provocative examples of using the body in and as a work of art in Brazil is Antonio Manuel's *O corpo e a obra* (1970) at the XXI National Salon at the Museum of Modern Art, in Rio de Janeiro. When Antonio Manuel submitted his own body as sculpture to the salon, the jury rejected his submission for not complying with their specifications. In reality, the jury's inadequacy of how to judge a live body as a work of art, the feasibility of where to house the artist and questions of ownership and procedure, resulted in his elimination. [112]

At this moment, censorship by the military regime was increasingly inconsistent, generating confusion of what constituted subversive material. Without definite boundaries, exhibition spaces and artists largely self-censored themselves, in fear of persecution. Hence, Manuel's seemingly abnormal entry into the national salon was a subversive metaphor for the absence of distinct rules of censorship, a critique of the institution's conservative values and their repressive views.[113] Manuel's defiant test for the jury's

[110] Critic Willoughby Sharp quoted in Ibid., 42.
[111] Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, 13.
[112] Calirman, 37-8.
[113] Ibid., 38.

artistic criteria harkened back to Marcel Duchamp's famous submission of a urinal to the inaugural exhibition of The Society of Independent Artists in 1917.[114] At the opening of the Salon, Manuel responded to his rejection by disrobing in front of all the attendees and climbing the staircase to the second floor of the museum. This display of irreverence towards institutionalism and the military regime gained him an infamous reputation with art critics, generating a political debate about artistic freedom, censorship, aesthetic value, and institutional policy.[115] For example, critics like Mario Pedrosa and Federico Morais praised his decision, while conservatives attacked it and called it "sexual exhibitionism." [116] Nevertheless, Manuel used his body was a way of liberating art from its outdated definition and exploring it as a device in overcoming institutional limitations.

Perhaps influenced by body artists like Manuel, Machado exhibited a performance/installation in the *Área Experimental Espaço-Sala Prática* (Experimental Area, Space for Practice*) (*1975-78) at MAM.[117] This piece continued his early interest in registering his body through performance, testing physical and conceptual limits. [118] His work separated the "Área Experimental" in the Sala Prática (Practice Room) into two

[114] Ibid., 42.
[115] Ibid., 40-1.
[116] Ibid., 40.
[117] The *Área Experimental Espaço-Sala Prática* at the Museum of Modern Art was a space presided over by the museum's Cultural Commission Board, consisting of artists and critics, such as Ronaldo Pontual (*Jornal do Brasil*), Anna Bella Geiger, Federico Morais, and Heloisa Aleixo Lustosa (Executive Director of MAM), sought to exhibit diverse proposals of "experimental art" by young contemporary Brazilian artists. Leaving behind a reductive definition of modern Brazilian art and market-driven interests, the space brought new languages of artistic practice accepting presentations of video art, performance, sculpture, drawing, and installation. The projects were to ignite a conversation about the production and consumption of art as well as the role of the museum. Fernanda Lopes, *Área Experimental: Espaço e Dimensão do Experimental na Arte Brasiliera dos anos 1970 (*São Paulo: Prestígo Editorial), 2013, 50.
[118] Machado's initial interest in and projects of documenting issues of the body began in 1973 with a performance at the Piccola Galeria, Instituto Italiano de Cultura, in Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, showing drawings, ceramic tile panels, and photos originating from a performance in which his body was wrapped in surgical bandaging. In the same vein, his early notebook drawings from 1972 also dealt with breaking through rigidity. His drawings faithfully reproduce ruled lines in a notebook; yet disturbed lines break off and tie themselves in knots, revolting against the function or conformity of a school notebook. Lopes, 156.

rooms, one doused in light and the other covered in shadow. The first room contained partitions of various heights made of wood, cutting the space longitudinally. These partitions corresponded to and were covered with photographs of city walls of Rio de Janeiro, photographed by David Geiger and Lúcio César Sattamini. In the second room, a video projection of Machado's performance at the opening of the exhibit showed him incessantly jumping against each wall and marking each time his body achieved a new height. Machado stated:

> "Increasingly, I want to mark the boundaries of my body and transmit their oscillations and difficulties. I am interested in probing the processes of impediment and relationships between different approaches that compose the work. Obstacles appear to me to be the relationship between the dimension of hindrance and the desire to overcome it." [119]

The installation and performance experiments with both physical and abstract impositions, possibly alluding to the physical limitations imposed by the military dictatorship. Yet through an ephemeral performance, Machado sought to overcome the limitations of his body, even testing his own dexterity or masculinity.[120] In a celebratory manner, Machado accomplishes new altitudes each time he jumps and realizes the capacity of his body to surpass obstacles to acknowledge his own corporeality. These examples of body art by Manuel and Machado celebrate the body as a political and conceptual instrument capable of defying governmental repression and censorship. Both artists use

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[119] "Cada vez mais quero marcar os limites do meu corpo e transmitir suas oscilaçoes e dificuldades. Interessa-me questioner os processos de impedimeto e as relacoes entre os diferentes tipos de abordagem de que se compoe o trabalho. Obstaclo me parce ser a relacao entre a dimensao de um impedimento e o desejo de ultrapassá-lo." Quoted in Ibid., 157.

[120] Fellow artist Ana Vitória Mussi photographed this performance. Behind those same walls inside darkened rooms, he performed scatological acts such as urinating and pornographic expressions. He later stated in an article about the performance in *Malasartes, n. 3*, a popular art magazine in Brazil at the time, "We have trespassed, and as we do it the artist is aware of the importance of this infringement of established rules, be it in the space of his personal work, or in the museum area, or within a broader social field." Ibid., 156.

their bodies to challenge existing definitions of art, resist the artwork as a commodity, and problematize conservative aesthetic values. With performance, their bodies become messages of resistance, and signify a freedom of exploration and creativity. "The experimental exercise of freedom," a phrase coined by Mário Pedrosa, perfectly sums up the idea of art as process, as open proposition, as collective action.[121]

In the early 1970s, Brazilian artists like Machado sought to resist governmental limits, fulfilling an impending desire to speak out. Machado uses video as an alternative media to television, to generate his own mode of communication. *Escravizador-Escravo* uses the body as a site for expression and as means for rebellion, calling upon the perversities or taboos in society particularly sexual violence, eroticism, and racial tensions. With an irreverence for propriety and the regime's definition of "good taste," Machado challenged collective definitions of race, sexuality, and power in postmodern Brazil, allowing for a sense of liberty from rigid constructions.

[121] Art critic Mário Pedrosa coined this expression in reference to Manuel's museum intervention, but later applied the phrase to all art practices that resisted the art market and rejected art as commodity. He specifically affirmed art methods that drew on lived experience. Calirman, 44.

ACTIVISM IN THE 1970s

As the dictatorship's power began to wane in the mid- to late 1970s, various activist and grassroots groups finally appeared with a strong presence, combating patriarchal norms, gender roles, and racial hierarchy. The re-democratization or *abertura* resulted in the loosening of restrictive policies and gave rise to disputes regarding gender and racial inequalities.[122] For instance, gay activists and feminists worked in the same arena opposing sexism and misogynist culture.[123] In 1976, *Nós Mulheres* (We Women), a self-proclaimed feminist Brazilian journal organized by student activist and feminist group from São Paulo coincided with homosexual publications such as *Lampião da Esquina* (Lantern on the Corner), a widely circulated monthly journal.[124] Soon after in 1978, *Somos* (We Are), Brazil's first gay rights organization, was founded in São Paulo.[125]

Meanwhile, the stagnant state of Afro-Brazilian consciousness and solidarity began to shift in early 1970s. The prominent voice of Abdias do Nascimento, Brazil's most influential Afro-Brazilian writer, scholar, activist, and politician of the 20th century, promoted Pan-African unity and Afro-Brazilian civil rights. Nascimento publically opposed racial democracy, strongly arguing that the idea "pathologized whiteness" and

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[122] No doubt influenced by the military dictatorship, racial/color categories in the 1970 census were omitted, making it difficult to obtain and confirm statistics of economic discrepancies among racial groups in Brazil, and further hindering the conversation of racial discrimination. Ed. Pierre-Michel Fontaine, *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985).
[123] Green, 244-5.
[124] Ibid., 271.
[125] Ibid., 274-5.

continued to drive African influence into extinction in Brazil.[126] His theatrical and cultural organization, *Teatro Experimental Negro* (TEN) (The Black Experimental Theater) founded in 1944, was designed to redeem Afro-Brazilian culture and organized an array of dramatic productions that trained Afro-Brazilians, some illiterate, to be dramatic actors. The theater productions revised the stereotypical roles of the Black nanny, cook, or domestic servant to star as heroes. TEN conceived of their programs as a platform to analyze, discuss, and exchange perspectives, giving value to and inspiring a connection with African culture.[127] In addition to their theater productions, they organized National Black Conventions, founded the Afro-Brazilian Democratic Committee, and established training schools for black cultural workers, aiming to educate the public.[128] The fervor of social consciousness spread as other organizations emerged such as *Grupo Evolução* (Evolution Group) (1970) in Campinas and the *Centro do Cultura e Arte Negra* (Negro Culture and Art Center) (1970) in São Paulo.[129]

In 1974, Rio de Janeiro saw massive social and cultural manifestations of Brazilian funk and soul music, coined *Black Rio,* and attracted black activists, intellectuals, and young Afro-Brazilians.[130] Such events located in the *zona norte* (north zone) of Rio de

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[126] Abdias Do Nascimento, *Brazil, Mixture or Massacre? Essays in the Genocide of a Black People,* 2nd ed. (Dover: Majority Press, 1989), 46.
[127] Nascimento, *Brazil, Mixture or Massacre? Essays in the Genocide of a Black People*, 45.
[128] Ibid., 47.
[129] Green, 53-4.
[130] The term *Black Rio* was coined by journalist Lena Frias in her July 17, 1976 article in the *Jornal do Brasil* entitled, "Black Rio – o orgulho (importado) de ser negro no Brasil (the (imported) pride of being black)." Frias spearheaded the debate as to whether the Brazilian popular interest in R&B, funk, and soul music was authentic in Brazil. Some were skeptical, regarding the movement as having no political significance or critical stance. To them, it was a foreign commodity, where soul enthusiasts bought into fads of the media, controlled by foreign interests. To the fans of soul and funk, the Black Rio scene was an expression of black counterculture and power. Ed. Pierre-Michel Fontaine, *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985), 107-9.

Janeiro, for example the *Noite do Shaft* or Shaft Night, were weekly *bailes* or dance parties with multimedia shows that highlighted key African American movies and celebrities, such as Super Fly, James Brown, and Dr. Martin Luther King.[131] Like the U.S. hippie counterculture, these parties celebrated visual symbols of black culture and generated their own characteristic styles.[132] *Baile* soul provided comfortable spaces for social interaction, free to shout "I'm Black and I'm Proud" or even sing the lyrics to musician Jorge Ben's song "Negro é Lindo" (Black is Beautiful) (1971). These "happenings" allowed for a reevaluation of the collective identity of Afro-Brazilians in Brazil, demanding recognition and respect for black pride. It was not until 1978 that the most significant group, the MNU or *Movimento Negro Unido* (United Negro Movement), gained traction in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro to conceive of themselves as a national Afro-Brazilian political party, voicing political agendas to eradicate racism in Brazil.[133] Although Machado's video performances were produced in 1974, before the founding of these parties, he demonstrates a cognizance of the underlying issues of gender, sexuality, and race, coinciding with Afro-Brazilian and gender rights movements.

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[131] Paulina Alberto, "When Rio was Black: Soul Music, National Culture, and the Politics of Racial Comparison in 1970s Brazil." Hispanic American Historical Review 89, no. 1 (2009): 10.
[132] Afro-Brazilians were criticized for "turning their backs" on nationalist symbols such as samba and other authentic Afro-Brazilian cultural forms to embrace foreign soul, so expressed through soul handshakes and afro hairstyles. Michael Turner, "Brown into Black: Changing Attitudes of Afro-Brazilian University Students," in *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985), 79.
[133] Ibid., 42-3.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis seeks to analyze Ivens Machado's video *Escravizsador-Escravo*, according to the body's emblematic relationship to themes of power, race, and sexuality. The video camera synthesizes the intermixture of political, social, and sexual dynamics. Related to "anti-aesthetics" in Brazilian art during this time, his unique strategy exposes these tensions in a raw, brutal, and complicated manner. His works do not adhere to the attractive and formalist aesthetics of geometric abstraction, such as those found in the work of Ivan Serpa or Waldemar Cordeiro.[134] As a pioneer video artist working within the *carioca or* Rio de Janeiro video group, Machado is interested in using the body as material in the making or unmaking of social relationships, consequentially rebelling against fixed definitions. The white and black bodies in his videos are in revolt, there to irk the viewer. Undoubtedly, *Escravizador-Escravo*'s academic obscurity stems from the threat of censorship, as it features violence, homosexuality, while challenging the conventional display of the body. When art critic Paulo Sergio Duarte describes the overt sexual dimension of Machado's work, stating that it "manipulates prejudices, handles taboos, as it breaks up with false hypocrisy and exposes the failure of the full accomplishment of desire," he gets to Machado's core concern in perverting falsehoods in

[134] Artists like Machado in the 1960s and 70s focused on an embodied experience that stems from the belief in the importance of sensorial and perceptual understanding. Neo-concrete Artists such as Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, and Lygia Pape privileged the participation of the viewer, calling upon the activation of the space around them. Their ideas stemmed from the "Manifesto Neoconcreto" (Neo-concrete Manifesto), written by Ferreira Gullar who positioned the Neoconcrete artists in opposition to the overly rational geometric abstract artists and Concrete Art movement. Calirman, 49.

contemporary Brazilian society.[135] With the body, he emulates these dynamics in order to question conditioned models of power.

The experimental videos, *Escravizador-Escravo* and *Versus*, intersect in their representation of race relations, painting a provocative portrait of the social and political contradictions intrinsic to Brazilian life at the time. They replicate the fantasy of the historic master-slave relationship, revealing violence and, most importantly, pleasure in exerting power over the Afro-Brazilian slave. In doing so, Machado implicates himself in replicating the dominating gaze of the viewer and the lack of agency of the viewed, still perpetuating the fetish and objectification of the black body.[136] And yet for Machado, the video camera acted as an alternative circuit of information, uncovering subjectivities long concealed by the mass media largely under the control of the authoritarian regime. Brazil was not and is not a racial paradise, free from prejudice or discrimination. Gilberto Freyre's assimilationist theory in his conception of racial democracy ingeniously translated Brazil's colonial history of slavery and Portuguese ancestry into an advantage of a culturally unique society. This analysis demonstrates how early video coincided with efforts was used to expose political and social oppression. Through symbolic actions, Machado's videos comment on far more than the military regime, but also the historically established, oppressive structures that existed in society in the early 1970s.

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[135] Paulo Sergio Duarte, "Brutal Purity," in *Ivens Machado: O Engeneiro de Fábulas*, ed. Ligia Canongia, (Rio de Janeiro: RJ, Petrobras, 2001), 178.

[136] Scholars such as Kobena Mercer and Cassandra Jackson both discuss representations of the black male body in art, literature, and popular culture. Their individual examinations reveal the prevalence of problematic connotations of objectification, effeminization, and "Otherness" associated with the black male body. See Mercer, "Reading Racial Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe" and Cassandra Jackson, *Violence, Visual Culture, and the Black Male Body* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

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